

# THE IMPORTANCE OF TV DEBATES FOR THE FORMATION OF POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 2005 IN POLAND

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*The role of TV debate in Poland in presidential elections in 2005 is investigated in this article. The Civic Platform promoted economic liberalism, Law and Justice promoted rules of social solidarity, increasing of the role of state in economy, public interventionism and keeping the main sectors of economy in hands of government by commercialization. But their programs didn't cause the increase of political awareness of Poles who numerously watched presidential debates. The leaders were Donald Tusk and Lech Kaczynski. The first debate took place on the 25th of September, the other on the 6th of October, 2005, both on commercial TVs: TVN24 and TVN. The leading journalist was well known Justyna Pochanke. Both candidates were promoting themselves as the best presidents of Poland. Donald Tusk said he would unite the society. Lech Kaczynski said that Poles would be proud of their country with him as a president.*

**Key words:** TV debate, programs of the leaders, electorate.

**I**t is difficult to talk about the importance of the one televised debate since Donald Tusk and Lech Kaczynski have had a chance before it to confront their views «face to face» at least five times in two months. Undoubtedly that debate affected public perception of the election campaign and also contributed to an increase in political consciousness of broad masses of viewers, although there was no clear who was the winner [1]. We must remember that a large part of Polish society was very interested in it. Debates inflamed emotions and at the same time facilitate to understand the political programs of the two competing parties. Even voters of a little familiar with the politics – generally speaking – identified camp of Donald Tusk (Civic Platform – PO) with economic liberalism and withdrawal from social policy. In contrast to PO, PiS (Law and Justice) was promoting social solidarity and increased the state participation in the economy, even using the instruments of state intervention in order to prevent the commercialization of key sectors of the statehood economy.

## 1. Foreign Policy

The first clash of the two candidates took place on 25th of September 2005 on TVN 24 channel. The show was conducted by Justyna Pochanke. But long before it in the newspapers and on the Internet there was a lot of speculation on which of various TV stations would host these two main candidates for presidency and who would lead this very special program. It would seem that the best place for it would be the building of the public television. But even at the beginning of October both contenders avoided confrontation «face to face». In a letter sent to the Polish Television (dated: 3rd of October; 2.20 pm.) Adam Bielan spokesman of «Law and Justice» and Jacek Protasiewicz, chief of the staff of Donald Tusk inform that the decision not to participate in the program proposed by TVP is due to both: the formula and the number of participants in this program, which hinders the presentation of views of both candidates. «We have been informed that in the event of resignation or absence of the program, a period of time allocated to the absent candidates will be used for discussion with other participants of the program so we fully accept this principle» – one can read in a letter sent to TVP. It was done despite the fact that on 23th of September 2005 TVP received a written confirmation of participation in the debate of Donald Tusk, but Lech Kaczynski's staff delayed the response until the 3rd of October. Therefore this day in the program guided by Barbara Czajkowska on «Election of the President of the Republic

of Poland» only «the second league» of candidates participated, without the leaders of the two main parties: PO and PiS. In the debate organized by TVP were taking part: Henryka Bochniarz, Jaroslaw Kalinowski, Maciej Giertych, Marek Borowski and Andrzej Lepper<sup>1</sup>.

Competitors had the opportunity to present to the electorate their visions of foreign policy, which plays, after all, the important role in the office of president. For a long time the ratio of foreign policy differentiate the two groups. PIS (Law and Justice) in its political concepts clearly alluded to the ideas of Jozef Pilsudski of the interwar era, especially creatively developed the concept of strengthening democratic states around Russia seen as a potential factor of instability in the region. However according to activists of PO Polish foreign policy should be based on the European Union and good economic relations with Russia, the most important state from outside the region.

For the question posted by polish journalist – Justyna Pochanke: where would you have gone for your first, symbolic visit abroad, as a new elected president ?

Tusk answered: «This is a question still valid and symbolic answer for that can always be false. There are several capitals, where the Polish interests require good and wise actions. Let`s take for example: our relations with the USA. When we examine my own views on this issue, and those of the Kaczynski brothers I have no doubt that the Polish – American relationships are not threatened and that the real problem today is: to get a strong position (financial) of the Polish state within the European Union and we have to work hardly day by day in order to use european financial resources in a better way than we use it today. We must do it better than some of ours, polish politicians responsible for that are doing now. European funds must be used better and we can fly to Washington and there arguing for a visa issue, for example. And in Europe, we have to get billions of zlotys, billions of zlotys for Poland, but it requires competence, it also – I would say – requires such openness and certain empathy with our European partners. Certainly, our position in Europe depends on our Polish – German relationships which needs to be improved, the same with Polish – French relationships and on a very strong our position in Brussels. Brussels, I understand, of course, symbolically as a seat of European bureaucracy – these are the three places where we are to act more boldly, but at the same time we must act with a sense of European solidarity»(Television debate: D.Tusk – L. Kaczyński (25.09.2005). TVN 24).

In turn, Lech Kaczynski said: «Why Washington ? Therefore, it is our main strategic partner. And in my opinion today strategic situation of Poland is not very clear. Strengthening of relations with Washington is the guarantee of our security (even energetic, gas security) and if it comes about these relations, mentioned by Donald Tusk, I think that fluctuations in the framework of which we can get from the EU more or less money – they are not variations within the amplitude, which is able to do something for Poland materially meant. We can use what we get, it is very important indeed. I can say one thing and say it calmly. Certainly. It would be good to improve our relations with Germany, but we cannot accept as a principle that whatever the Germans do it is good for us. Let`s take the their last project with that pipe through the Baltic Sea or project related to the Centre Against Expulsions in Berlin – a center for the displaced – let`s name it this way. These are projects that we cannot accept and give no comments on them. Sometimes we will react in a proper way» (Television debate. –25.09.2005. TVN 24).

## **2. Internal Policy. The problem of Vetting**

The next meeting took place on October 6, 2005 was broadcasting by TVN and TVN 24. And again it was led by Justyna Pochanke with a help of another journalist – Bogdan Rymanowski this time. During this debate both candidates : Lech Kaczyński and Donald Tusk were talking about access to the materials which had been gathered by the secret services («teczki»), social issues, relations between Poland and Russia, promises given during the presidential campaign and about their colleagues-cooperators. Both candidates consistently maintained their previous positions on

<sup>1</sup> <http://ww2.tvp.pl/4148,20051003252069.strona>.

access to documents stored in the IPN (Institute of the National Memory. PiS candidate for the office of Polish President Lech Kaczyński called for the disclosure of files of public officials and politicians, while Tusk – stressed on universal access of citizens to these materials.

«I'm in favour to reveal all agents – all, and to be clear, including those of the Interior Military Service (WSI), which had very extensive structures of agency» – Kaczyński said (Television debate. – 06.10.2005. TVN 24). General access to the materials should have government officials and politicians – he added. According to him, vetting should not apply to those trade unionists who in the past fought bravely for the independence of Poland but today they find themselves often on the margins of life. In those cases, the secret service's (SB) viewpoint would have won, because this viewpoint is contained in the materials gathered in the IPN. This is a vision that should not be shown – stressed the candidate of PiS for president. During the debate, both candidates were also asked about whether the people of their formations to whom serious allegations were posted publicly should not resign of the first line activities of their parties.

Journalist who were leading the debate recalled what has been recently revealed by the tabloid «Fakt» about a candidate of PiS (Law and Justice) for the office of the Prime Minister – Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz and his connection with Mieczysław Styczeń – a man suspected of swindling money from Kraków entrepreneurs (they were dining together in a restaurant). In August the weekly «Newsweek» published an article in which an anonymous businessman from Wrocław said that the deputy of Civic Platform (PO) Grzegorz Schetyna promised to help him to get permission for building works in exchange for sponsoring of the basketball club Śląsk (Silesia). Lech Kaczyński said that Marcinkiewicz and Styczeń know each other, but this situation is different than a complaint against Grzegorz Schetyna. He noted that several weeks after placing in «Newsweek» plea Schetyna is still the Secretary General of the Civic Platform. He stressed that when it is about the politicians of Law and Justice (PiS) against whose some allegations (not very proved) were formulated the party reacted as it should have been: «We react sharply, but to meet someone cannot be the subject of complaint» Kaczyński added.

In the course of discussion Lech Kaczyński promised to stopped (vetoing) legislation which provides for cutting the welfare. Such plans for today were not disclosed yet, but if someone wants to introduce a tax 3x15 % and at the same time wants to reduce VAT to the level of 15 % so question arises where to find reserves – PiS candidate added. According to Lech Kaczyński social program of the Civic Platform must lead to a reduction of social benefits. Both Lech Kaczyński and Donald Tusk pronounced themselves against the legalization of gay marriage. Lech Kaczyński strongly objected to legalise homosexual «marriages», making of them a kind of legal institution even if it wouldn't have become named marriage.

As regards the security of Poland Lech Kaczyński argues that the money given to the police never cannot be regretted. In turn, Tusk said that as a president he will reduce the funds spent on the Office of the President. In his opinion, the money saved can be spent on security. Both presidential candidates agreed that the Polish policy towards Russia should be assertive. According to Tusk, important thing is that UE should lead common policy towards Russia. In turn, Lech Kaczyński criticized Tusk's unjustified optimism and announced that in this matter support would seek in Washington. At the same time referring to the case of the Russian-German gas pipeline on the Baltic seabed Kaczyński stressed that this project is extremely dangerous for Poland. According to him, if the pipeline is to pass through the Polish economic zone, it is necessary to block its construction saying clearly – «not». In addition Lech Kaczyński said that if he fails in this way to block construction of the pipeline, he is not scared of anything and, if it is possible from the point of view of the international law he will block its construction. Moreover, according to the PiS candidate, Poland must immediately look for other than Russian energy supplies.

The first issue was the continuity of the policy after two previous presidents: Lech Walesa and Aleksander Kwasniewski. For the question: «In the Third Polish Republic we had terms of two presidencies – Aleksander Kwasniewski and Lech Walesa. Both of them acted their offices in

various juridical systems so the most important question is: which of these variants is the better for Poland: a variant in which we take everything the President and the Prime Minister which may create a dangerous monopoly of power, or a quite opposite variant: our Prime Minister and your president which may threaten to turn into constant rough and tumble and the war at the top which foretaste we have in the last days».

Tusk said: «I would like Polish politics were balanced and Poles, as I think, are expecting and need balance and moderation and common sense. There is no doubt that the situation in which we would choose the president, whose brother is actual, or will be the actual Prime Minister and the head of the ruling party is a worrying situation for Poles and bad for Poland – this is not a personal plea but there is no doubt that this situation is not good for Poland» (Television debate. – 06.10.2005. TVN 24).

In turn, Lech Kaczynski said: «Poland will not probably be ruled by two brothers, because my brother, in this case, would be the head of the party, who obviously will be the influential politician. I will be the president and a man of very different tasks. I think that if we want to actually change Poland, where the Third Republic of Poland, having some advantages, but also a tremendous amount of defects is to be changed by the Fourth Republic of Poland, which is qualitatively a different state than it was before, then the authority must belong to those forces, which during 90ties, alerted, which were able to alert even at the price – let me say – repressions, elimination from the political life, which never showed the slightest opportunism, and such a force is «Law and Justice» party and the PiS candidate for President I am. The fact that we are brothers with Jaroslaw have is no slightest importance» (Television debate. – 06.10.2005. TVN 24).

### **3. The Attempt to Bbreak Out With a «Black» PR**

Further clash of two leading politicians of PiS and PO took place on 12th of October, 2005 on TVN channel. This time it was in the program «Teraz My» (Here we are!). Both rivals to the chair of the President were hosted by the program's moderators Andrew Morozowski and Thomas Sekielski. At the beginning of the program Lech Kaczynski said: «Today I have here to apologize to Donald Tusk for a black campaign. As Mister Marshal knows that it was done without my knowledge, or knowledge of my brother... conclusions were drawn immiditely. Jacek Kurski will face disciplinary court. The chief of the party cannot do anything more ie. he himself cannot remove someone from the party. He was of course removed from the staff. That`s all I have to say in this case. It was a part of the black campaign and as such it cannot be tolerated. Of course today certain facts were disclosed, but even independently of certain facts – it cannot be an argument in the election campaign» (Television debate. – 20.10.2005. TVN 24). As stated by Andrew Morozowski: «Just to be clear let`s recall. The point is that yesterday Jacek Kurski in one of the newspapers, insinuated that the grandfather of Donald Tusk could have been in the Wehrmacht but it turned out a total untruth» (Television debate. – 20.10.2005. TVN 24).

### **4. Some Controversies About the People Supporting the Campaign**

Reconfrontation took place on Oct. 20, 2005 and was guided again by the team: Justyna Pochanke and Bogdan Rymanowski. And during this presidential debate televised by the channels: TVN and TVN 24 Donald Tusk declared he would be such a president who «will unite the Poles, and not divide them»Then Lech Kaczynski said that his presidency would be the one during which the Poles would be satisfied with their own country. Both candidates called for supporting them in the second round of presidential elections. First clash between these two presidential candidates took place in conjunction with the support of the candidature of Tusk by famous scandalistic journalist Jerzy Urban. Mr. Urban said that although he was «disgust» by the candidature of Tusk he would vote for him. According to Kaczynski this situation attests that Kaczynski's presidency would be more dangerous for Mr. Urban. He warned that if Mr. Tusk wins the election then «the saloon of of Mr. Urban and his ilk will still have an impact on the Polish public life». Tusk replied

for that he must accept the fact that he is supported by the people with whom he is not at the same board and he has nothing to do with them but he does not want to «divide the Poles. In the next step Tusk accused Kaczynski that advocating against Leszek Balcerowicz as the head of National Polish Bank (NBP) he joined the chorus of Andrzej Lepper which repeats «Balcerowicz must go out».

Kaczynski said that on this issue has nothing to do with Andrzej Lepper and the declaration of supporting his candidacy. At the same time Kaczynski refused to promise that the PiS will not support Lepper for the chair of the Deputy Speaker. He added that he respects the Lepper's electorate, because they are the people who «feel themselves in Poland badly» (Television debate. – 20.10.2005. TVN 24). Donald Tusk assured his rival that the participation of Konstantyn Miodowicz (PO) in the affair of Anna Jarucka will be clarified and, if necessary, harsh consequences will be drawn. The audience have learned, too, that both candidates feel themselves to be heirs of Solidarity, but Kaczynski added that «he acted in the highest authorities of Solidarity». According to Tusk all Poles have the right to to be proud of the heritage of Solidarity.

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### **Важливість теледебатів для формування політичної свідомості у президентських виборах 2005 року в Польщі**

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*Простежується роль телевізійних дебатів у Польщі під час президентських виборів 2005 р. «Платформа Обивательська» декларувала економічний лібералізм, а «Право і Справедливість» проголошувала засади суспільної солідарності, збільшення участі держави в економіці країни, державну інтервенцію та утримання в руках держави головних секторів економіки через її комерціалізацію. Лідерами були Дональд Туск і Лех Качинський. У ході дебатів вони представили свої платформи, з яких поставали їхні політичні погляди. Перші дебати відбулися 25 вересня, а другі 6 жовтня 2005 р. Всі вони проходили на приватних телеканалах ТВН 24 і ТВН. Вела дебати Юстина Поханка. Обидва кандидати представляли себе найкращими майбутніми президентами Польщі. Дональд Туск переконував – у разі перемоги буде об'єднувати суспільство, а Лех Качинський, обіцяв, що поляки пиштимуться своєю країною.*

*Ключові слова:* теледебати, програми кандидатів, електорат, виборці.

### **Важность теледебатов для формирования политического сознания в президентских выборах 2005 года в Польше**

**Гайковский Станислав**

*Статья показывает роль телевизионных дебатов в Польше во время президентских выборов 2005 г. «Платформа Обывательская» декларировала экономический либерализм, а «Право и Справедливость» провозглашала принципы общественной солидарности, увеличение участия государства в экономике страны, государственную интервенцию и удержание в руках государства главных секторов экономики посредством ее коммерциализации. Лидерами были Дональд Туск и Лех Качинский. В ходе дебатов они представили свои платформы, с которыми связаны их политические взгляды. Первые дебаты прошли 25 сентября, а следующие 6 октября 2005 г. Все они проходили на частных телеканалах ТВН 24 и ТВН. Вела дебаты Юстина Поханка. Оба кандидата представляли себя наилучшими будущими президентами Польши. Дональд Туск убеждал – в случае победы будет объединять общество, а Лех Качинский обещал, что поляки будут гордиться своей страной.*

*Ключевые слова:* теледебаты, программы кандидатов, электорат, избиратели.

1. Jabłoński W. Kreowanie informacji. Media relations. – Warszawa : Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2006. – 180 s.

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